

## When and How the presence of Sankara had been felt in the ancient Tamizhagam?

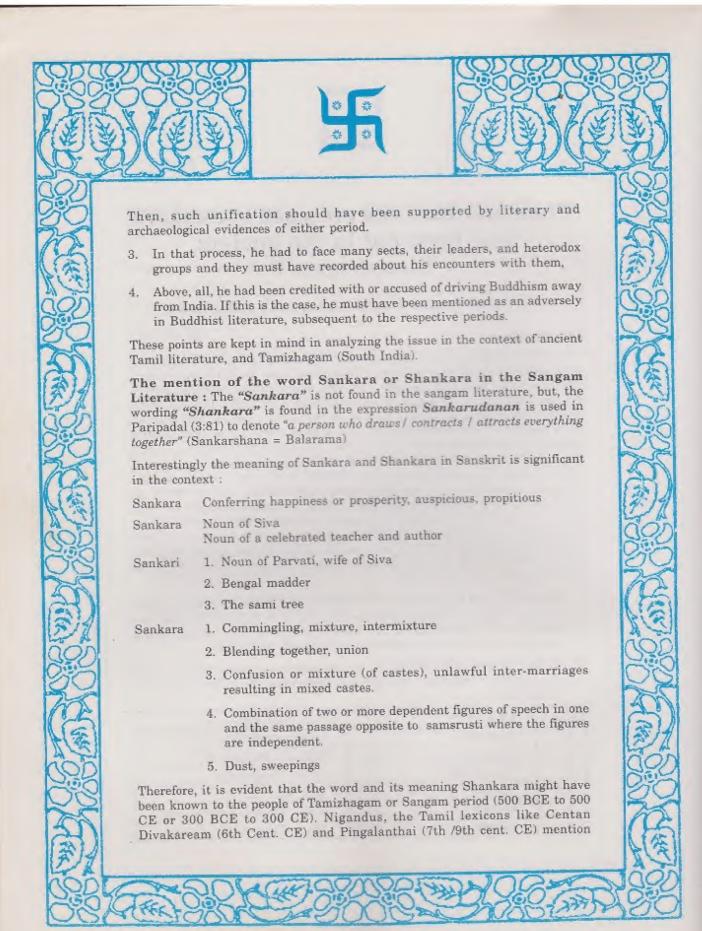
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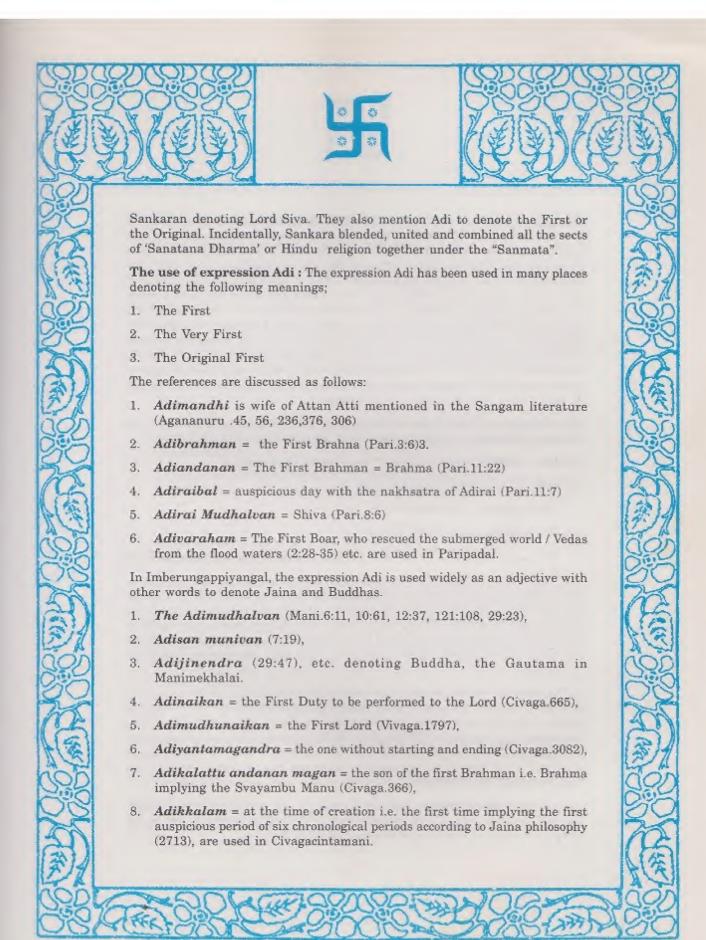
## Introduction

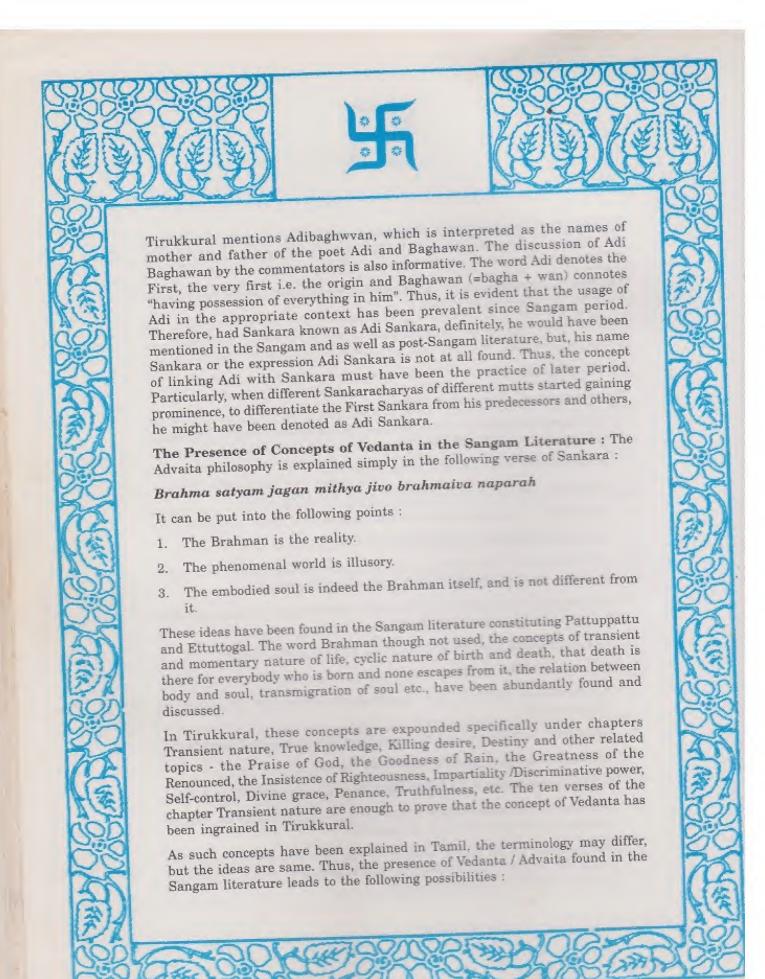
The dates of Sankara vary from 6th century BCE to 9th century CE depending upon different supporting evidences. There have been some extreme datings like 32nd cent. BCE and 14th cent. CE also, which can be retracted as they are not supported by any evidences, except by mere mentioning. However, there are two groups who specifically form short-listing the available varied dates. Thus the date of Sankara has been fixed as 788-820 CE by the modern scholars based on several synchronisms, a Cambodian inscription, Dravidasisu reference etc. Other scholars have fixed the date 509-477 BCE based on the literary, contemporary, astronomical and other evidences. In fact, the Mutts claimed to have been established by Sankara follow only the date 509-477 BCE. As Sankara was born, brought up, educated in scriptures, became sanyasi at young age and most of his other activities must have taken place in the ancient Tamizhagam i.e. the present south India, his presence could not have been unfelt by the colleagues and contemporaries in his lifetime. As his work has been so predominant, it could not have been unnoticed by others. Thus the following points are considered.

- As Sankara has taken birth in Tamizhagam and therefore, had he been so active during the periods 6th and 5th centuries BCE or 8th and 9th centuries CE, he would not have been forgotten to be mentioned by the contemporary rulers, philosophers, saints, poets and others.
- In fact, he has been credited for the unification of Hindu religion under the banner of 'Sanmata' embracing all faiths and bring them under six major paths:-

Sl.No.	Main Deity	Faith and worship of		
1.	Ganapatya	Ganapati, Vinayaka etc.		
2.	Kaumaram	Kumara, Muruga etc.		
3.	Vaishnavam	Visnu, Tirumal etc.		
4.	Sauram	Sun, Agni etc.		
5.	Saktam	Sakti, Parvati, Kotravai etc.		
6.	Saivam	Shiva, Pasupati, Rudra etc.		









- 1. The influence of Vedanta / Advaita is found in the Sangam literature.
- 2. Thus, Sankara might have preceded Sangam period.
- 3. As such ideas are present already in Tamil literature, Sankara might have been influenced by it.

The verification of possibilities:

- The Vedic influence on Sangam literature has been accepted and discussed by the Tamil scholars and historians. Therefore, the presence of Vedanta / Advaita ideas in the Tamil literature is appreciable and reasonable.
- Had it been true and historical, then the existence of Sankara before Sangam period can be considered.
- Had Sankara lived in the post-Sangam period, it is quite possible that he
  might have been influenced by it. However, there is no proof that Sankara
  knew Tamil.
- 4. As he appeared to have conversed and debated in Sanskrit at different parts of Bharat, it is evident that either Sanskrit was lingua franca of Bharat at his times or he must have used local languages.
- He became capable of interpreting the scripture at the age of twelve, and completed the writing of the bhashyas at sixteen. Therefore, the influence of other factors on him is ruled out.

Adi Sankara making references about Nayanmars: In the slokas attributed to Sankara, there are some references, which are taken by the scholars and interpret that Sankara has alluded them and therefore, he might precede them. In Saundarya Lahari, there is a reference of "Dravida shishu" mentioned (verse.75). Here, scholars are divided in the interpretation of the expression "Dravida shishu". One group argues that it refers to Sankara himself and another holds that it refers to Tirugnana Sambandar, a Tamil Savite Saintpoet of 7th century CE. Thus, the latter group asserts that Adi Sankara must have preceded Tirugnana Sambandar and therefore, his date could be fixed in 8th century or so.

Adi Sankara in the same work, in 63<sup>rd</sup> sloka alludes to Kannappa Nayanar as follows:

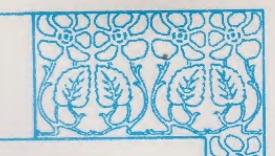
Margavarttapaduka pasupate : Ankasya kurcayate......

Then, it can be argued that Kannappa Nayanar preceded Adi Sankara.

Similarly, in Sivabhujanga Stotra, he mentions the following personalities as follows:







Na sankremi kanta pardhrohalesham katam piryase tvam na jane girisha | Tata hi prasanaarsi kanyapi kantasutadhrohino va pitrudhrohino va | |

and their literary meaning is given against each:

- 1. Kantadrohi = enemy or adversary of wife.
- 2. Sutadhrohi = enemy or adversary of son.
- 3. Pitrudhrohi = enemy or adversary of father.

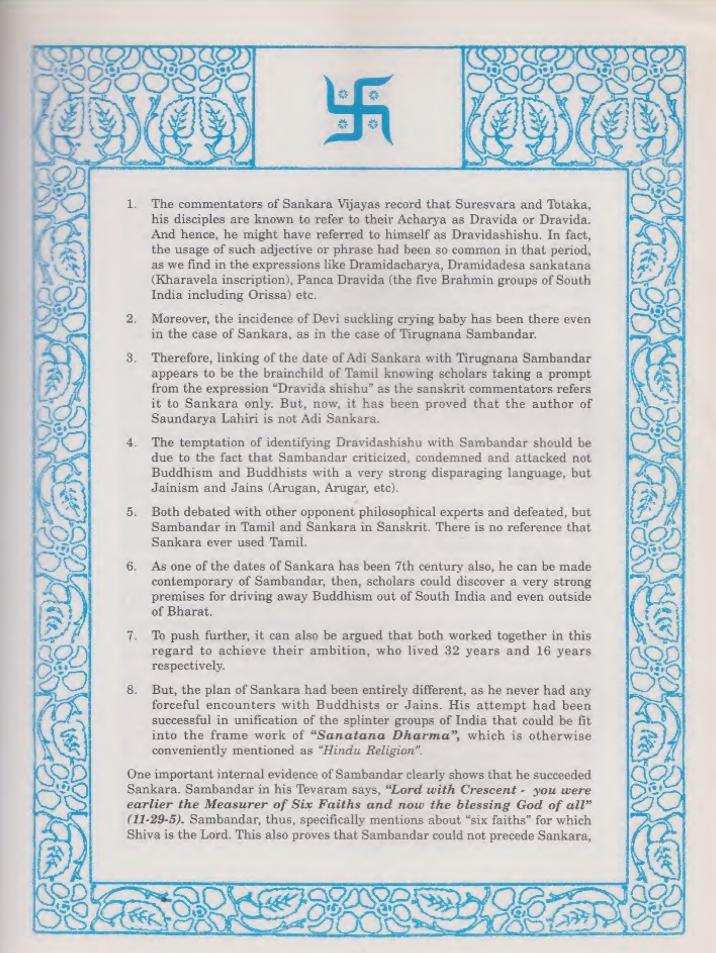
Those who are familiar with Sirutondar togal (a compilation of devotees) and *Periya puranam*, (A Big or Great Purana, which narrates the lives of Saints of Lord Siva), they can easily identify such personalities as follows:

Expression used	Equivalent Personality and his name according to Tamil Literature	Their approximate date period	
Kantadrohi	Sundaramurthy Nayanar Iyarpagal Nayanar Kazharsinga Nayanar Kalikamba Nayanar Kunguliyakalaya Nayanar	7th or 9th century CE Before 12th century CE - d0 do do -	
Sutadhrohi Sirutonda Nayanar		8th Century CE	
Pitrudrohi	Chandesha Nayanar	Before 12th century CE	
	Kannappar	- do -	

In sivanandalahiri, there is a mention about worship of Siva by throwing stones on Him) verse.81). Then, it might imply Sakya Nayanar and also Arjuna. Therefore Sankara has actually alluded Sakya Nayanar or Arjuna has to be decided carefully in the context, as it can be interpreted that the precdecessor of Sankara was Sakya Nayanar thus placing somewhere in 6th / 7th / 8th centuries or Arjuna thus putting him during 3102-3050 BCE period

Here, it has to be noted that the dates of Nayanmars have not been fixed conclusively. It is not known as to whether all 63 Nayanmars enumerated are historical or otherwise, as the narratives contain many hagiographical incidents and miracles like apocryphal narratives of other world religions. Therefore unless the dates of Nayanmars are fixed conclusively they cannot be linked with Sankara or fix his date. Moreover, he could have used such expressions in general also. Moreover, Sanskrit scholars who have analysed the verses of these slokas have clearly shown that the said works have not been written / composed by Sankara.

Tirugnana Sambandar and Adi Sankara: There have been striking similarities between Adi Sankara and Tirugnana Sambandar and some of the important points are discussed as below:





because, it is Sankara, who has been credited with the introduction of Sanmata. Therefore, taking the literary evidence of Sambandar (7th cent.CE) and archaeological evidence of Mahendra Varman I (600-630 CE), Sankara has to be placed before 6th cent. CE.

The Dates of Sambandar: As Sambandar's date is associated with Sankara, his date has to be fixed correctly. The dates of Tirugnana Sambandar vary from first century BCE or CE to 7th century. As he lived for just 16 years, some scholars have recently raised a doubt as to whether such a personality has ever existed at all. In any case, the different dates assigned to him by different scholars are tabulated as follows:

No. Author & reference		Date / period	Reasoning		
1.	Simon Kasi Chetty <sup>5</sup>	5th century CE	As mentioned in the Cholas "Puruva Copper Plate", Sambandar Navukkarasar and Nambiyarurar belonged to the same period.		
2.	Taylor	1320 BCE	According to him, Ky Pandian reigned during 13 BCE and therefore Samband belonged to the same period		
3.	C. W. Damodharam Pillai	Before 2000 years before present	s As Kun Pandian existed 2000 YBP, Sambandar must have existed accordingly		
4.	P. Kumaraswamy	1st century CE	As the story of dead-merchan due to poisoning is found i Silappathikaram, according t Gayabahu syncronism 113-13 CE, he must have existe some years before him.		
5.	Hultszh	c. 1st Cent.CE	As most of Thevara songs wer composed during the reigns of Karikalan and Koccenganan there is no bar to fix the date of authors of Thevaram t their period.		
6.	P. Sundaram Pillai Cent. CE	Beginning of 7th Dravidasisu with	Based on the identification of Ganana Sambandar and hence he must have existed before Sankara.		



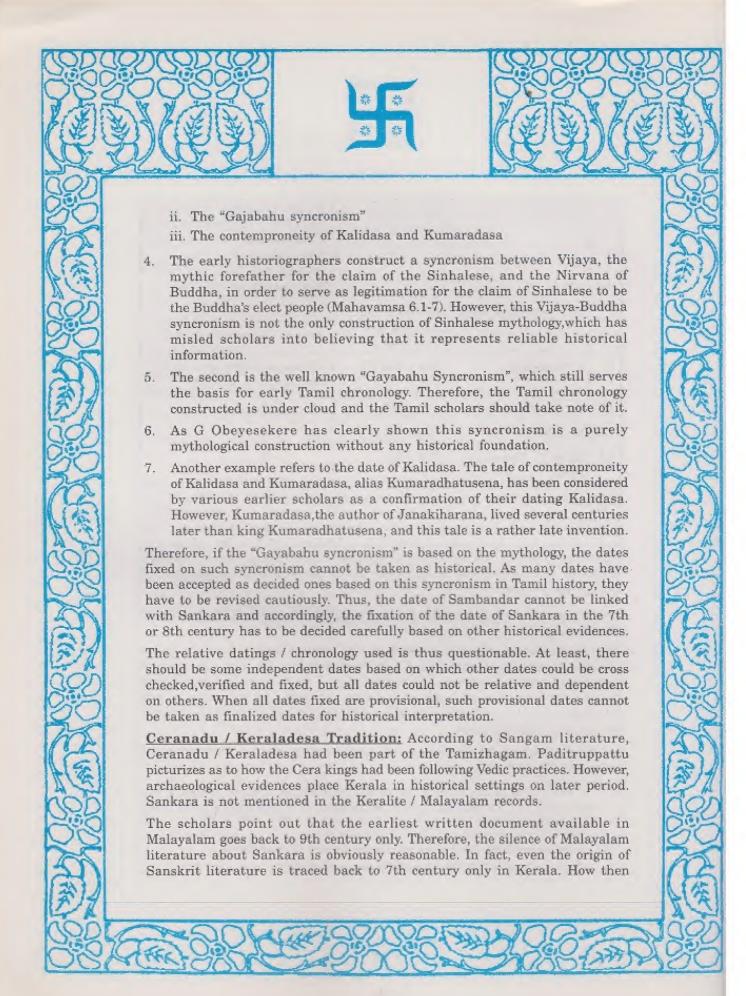
7.	Doraisamy Pillai	6th cent.CE	If "Tirumetrali" temple is equated / identified with "Tirukatrali", then, he must have belonged to 550 CE, as Hultszh has fixed the date of "Tirukatrali" as 550 CE
8.	K.S. Srinivasa Pillai	Between 609 and 642 for 16 years	
9.	P. Soundara	638 - 656 CE	Contemproneity of Sirutondar, Appar etc.
10.	M. Rajamanickam	640 - 656	— do —
11.	R. Vellaivaranar	638 - 654	— do —
12.	Avvai S. Doraisamy Pillai	639 - 655	— do —

Here, it can be noted as to how dates are fixed depending upon the known dates by any scholars who attempted to do so. Fro example, P. Sundaram Pillai fixes date of Gnana Sambandar based on the identification of Dravidasisu with him and hence he must have existed before Sankara, while other scholars do other way. In fact, in his discussion, he himself clearly realizes the impossibility of Sankara recording the Nayanmars. About Dravidasisu, discussion has already been made.

## The "Gayabahu syncronism" and Related Datings used in the Tamil Chronology:

The "Gayabahu syncronism" is adapted and adopted widely by the western scholars for the Tamil chronology and Tamil scholars too. But, the western scholars themselves expose the hallowness in such methodology. Heinze Bechert, in his recent research on the date of Buddha points out as to how scholars manipulate different data and information for their required purposes. He accepts following facts:

- The interesting aspect concerns the origin of chronological information and its use by historians.
- He points out in the volume on the date of Buddha, that the reader would meet with various examples of the fabrication of chronological constructions and synchronisms.
- In the case of Sri Lanka, he mentions three such examples —
   i. The syncronism of Vijaya and Nirvana of Buddha







Sankara could have learned Sanskrit, mastered Vedas and connected scriptures to become master and expound Advaita philosophy to the world? Within such short period, could he have produced such world famous literature of philosophy, theology and ethics? All Sanskrit works which mention his name e.g. Sarvajnatman (10th cent. CE), Sankarahrdayagama (13th cent. CE) Durgaprasadayati (14th cent. CE) and the works attributed to him are dated in the later period only.

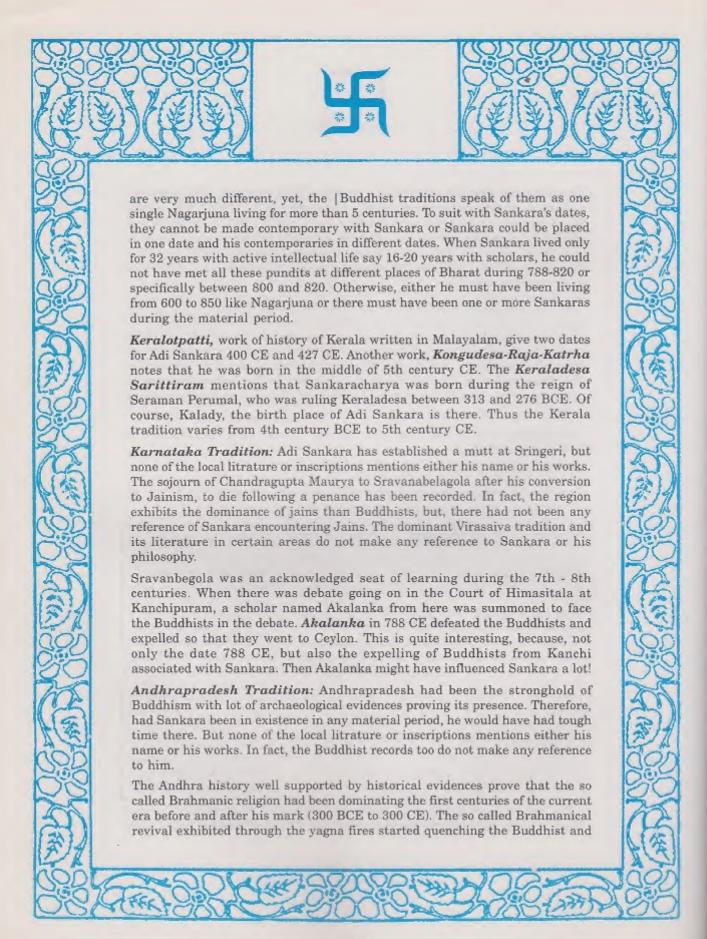
That Kerala Sanskrit literature could go back to 7th century and other conclusions are made only based on available evidences without taking other collaborating and corroborative circumstantial evidences into account. However, it may be noted that the Kerala school of astronomy goes back to 3rd century CE with Vararuchi. In fact, the Kerala astronomers fervently claim that Aryabhata belong to them. Therefore, such contradicting features have to be taken into account and reconciled by the scholars who have involved in deciding dates.

The contemporary scholars, who have debated with Sankara have been placed in different periods.

- a) Darmakirti is dated to 530-600 and 600 -660 CE
- b) Kumarila Bhatta is dated back to early 7th cent, CE, 600-660 CE & so on
- c) Mandala Misra is dated to 615-695 CE, 690-710 CE and so on.

Author	Philosopher	Date assigned	Remarks
Taranatha Tibetan Lama	Kumarila Bhatta	7th cent CE	He was a contemporary of the Tibetan King Srong-stan-Gampo who ruled in 7th cent. CE
S.Kuppuswami Sastri	-d0-	600-660 CE	In his introductionto the Brahma Siddhi"
Jha	—do—	Early 7th cent. 600-650 CE	Because he wa a junior contemporary of Prabhakar, who lived between 600 and 650 CE.
S.Kuppuswami Sastri	Mandana Misra	615 —695 CE	
P. V. Kane	do	690-710 CE	History of Dharna Sastra, Vol.i pp.252-256

Thus, each appears to have been living for many years. Scholars point out that though *Madhyaamika Nagarjuna* (2nd cent. CE) and *Tantrija Nagarjuna* 





scorching | jaina creeds to death. This clearly indicates the irrelevance of | Sankara to appear again thereafter and beat the dead horse.

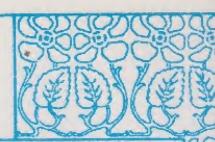
The Contemporary Rulers of Tamizhagam: Politically, the ancient Tamizhagam is nothing but South India comprising the four states, Tamilnadau, Andhrapradesh, Karnataka and Kerala. However, this region was ruled by different dynasties concentrating their powers to certain cities and surrounding areas. Thus the kings and rulers of different dynasties like the Banas, the Muttariyas, the Kodumballur chiefs, the Cholas of Uraiyur and Palaiyarai, the Cholas of Renadu, the Adigamans, the Western Gangas, the Rastrkutas, the Nonambas and others were reigning the areas. Of which, those who were ruling between 8th and 9th century are considered as follows:

Name of the Ruler	Date (approximate)	Dynasty
Nandivarman Pallava Mallan	710-755	Pallava
Dandivarman	775-826	— do —
Nandivarman II	826-849	— do —
Neduncadaiyan Parandagan	765-790	Pandya
Rajasimha Pandyan II	790-792	— do —
Varaguna Pandyan	792-835	— do —
Vikramaditya	733-743	Chalukya
Dhruva	780-794	Rastrakuta
Govinda II	793-814	— do —
Amoghavarsha I Nriptunga	814-878	— do —
Narppidigu alias Paradiraiyan	770-791	Muttaraiya
Videlvidunga Muttarian alias Kuravan Sattan	791-826	— do —
Sattam Paliyal	826-851	— do —
Simhapota Nombadhiraja	785-805	Nolamba
Parameswara Pallavadhiraja alias Charuponnera	805-830	— do —
Vijayaditya I	772-824	Bana
Malladeva	824-843	— do —
Vikramaditya I	843-892	— do —

They were patronizing Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina believers, though, they had different faith and pursuit. However, none of them appeared to have had any







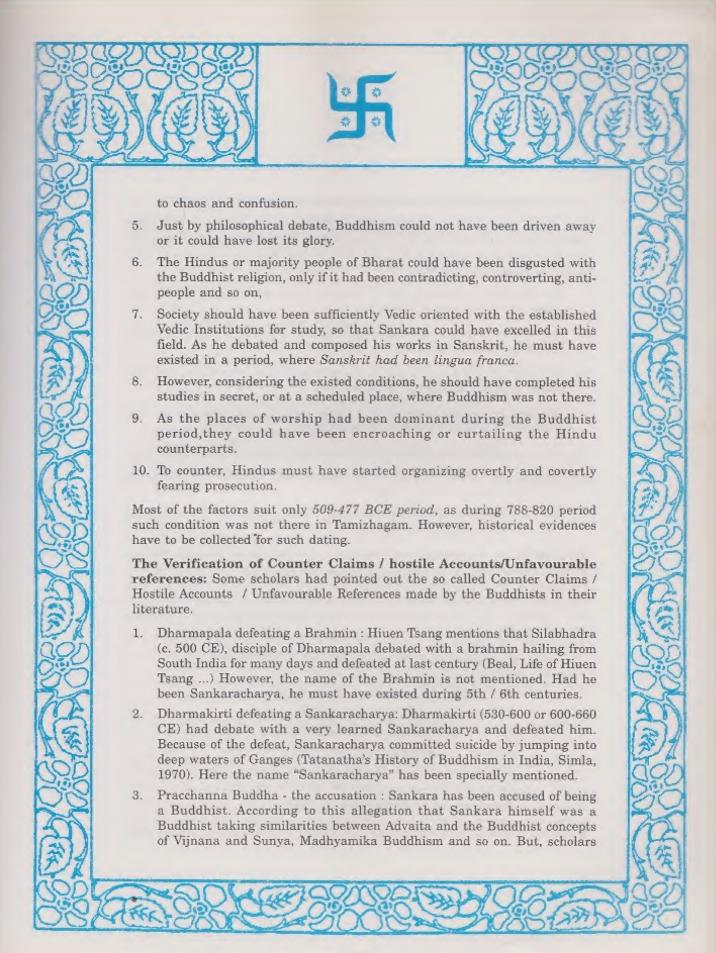
acquaintance with Sankara. Though, Sankara was reportedly moving from place to place meeting different people, it is intriguing to note, why none had appeared to have felt his presence during the 8th and 9th century rulers. Even the contemporary literature has been silent about him. The Azhwars and Nayanmars, who have been assigned to the period have also not whispered about him. Some of the contemporary Saint-poets are tabulated below:

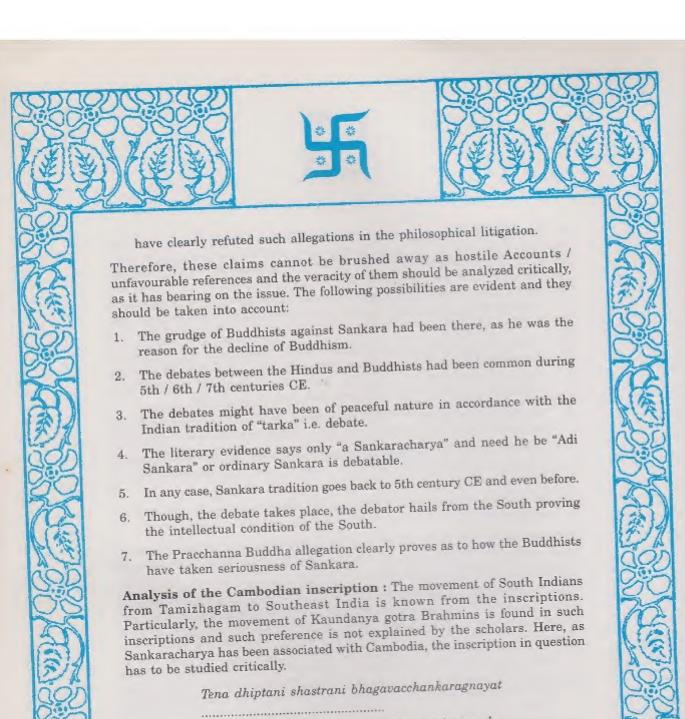
Name of the Saint-poet	Period		
Tirugnanasambandar	c 7thcent. CE		
Tirunavukkarasar	—do—		
Iyadigal Kadavarkon	—do—		
Sundarar	c 8th cent. CE		
Ceraman Perumal	—do—		
Enathi Sattanj Sattanar	—do—		
Maickavacagar	c 9th cent. CE		
Pattinathu Adigal	—do—		
Centhanar	—do—		
Perumanadigal	—do—		

Moreover, in his attempts of unifying the different faiths of various Gods and Goddesses, he must have had encounters with all those believers and their representatives at different places of India, particularly in South India. But, it is totally surprising to note that even the orthodox and fundamental Samayacharyas had been ignorant about him or took cognizance of his work. Therefore, it is evident that during the 8th and 9th centuries, he might not have existed.

## The possibilities for Sankara to Exist During 509-477 BCE or 788-820 CE Period in the Ancient Tamzhigam:

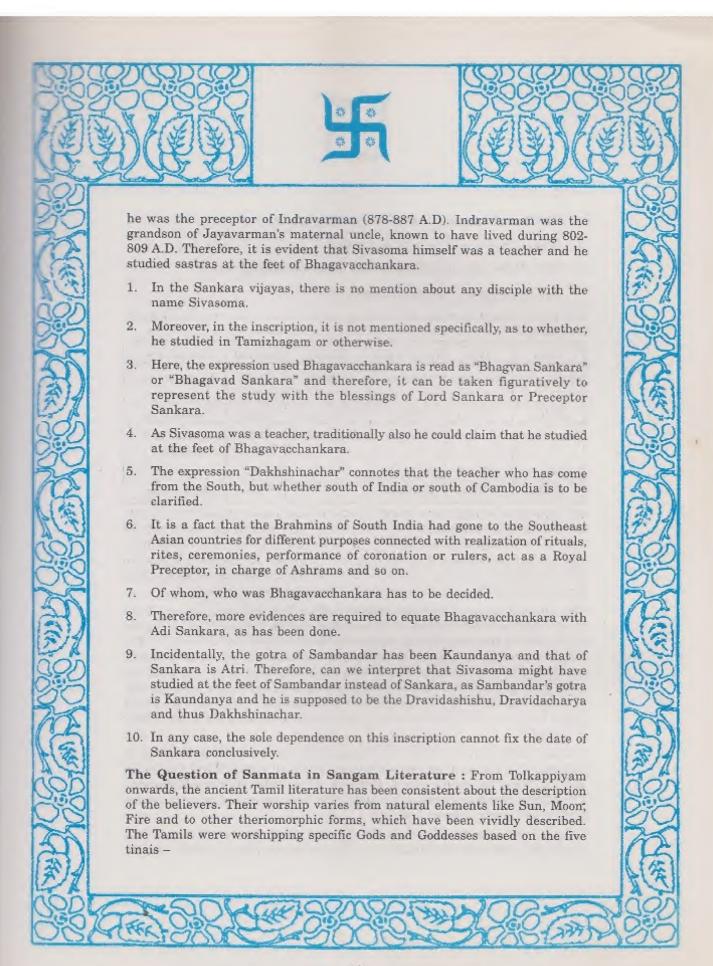
- The Buddhist region must have been dominating Government with the political patronage.
- The believers of Hindu religion should be at receiving end i.e. they would have been placed at adverse conditions.
- Any Hindu religious head could have taken such an extreme decision of driving away Buddhism, only, if Buddhist posed such a danger to Hindus and their society.
- In other words, the Buddhism must have renounced its ethics of nonviolence, etc., and resorted to mundane methods to meet its end leading





Yah: sadha dakhshinachar: kumbayonirivaparah Nishsheshamudharli malalidadagripangajat Tarka kavya dishabutamidhabhudhimavaya yaha Purana bharatas shaisha saiva vyakarnadhishu Shastreshy kushalo yohabhut tatkaraka iva svayam Saravidhaikanilayo vedhavidh viparsambhavah Shasko yasya bhagvan rudro ivaparah:

Sivasoma is said to have studied sastras at the feet of Bhagavacchankara and







- 1. Kurouchi (Mountain and its surrounding areas),
- 2. Mullai (Forest and their related areas),
- 3. Marudham (agricultural fields and their surrounding areas),
- 4. Neydhal (Ocean / sea and its areas) and
- Palai (desert and its surrounding areas), each with specific Gods as follows:

Tinai	God	Tamil name	Vahana	Element	Natural area
Kurinchi	Murugan	Ceylon	Peacock	Earth,	Mountainous area
Mullai	Vishnu	Mayon	Kite/Garuda	Water	Forest area
Marudham	Indra	Vendan	Elephant/ Ram	Fire	Agricultural field
M-idhal	Varuna	VArunan	Swan	Wind	Oceanic Area
Neidhal Palai	Sakti	Kotravai	Lion	Ether	Desert Area

From the panchabhutatva of assigning God to each natural mode, it can easily be related to six factors. In fact, the numbers five and six are easily related together cosmologically, theologically and philosophically. Sankara, has perhaps taken a cue from this five division to form 'Sanmata' or incorporate the the existing into the new mode by just adding one more, so that all believers could be easily accommodated without any problem and compromise.

The Driving away of Buddhism from India: If the fact that Sankara drove away Buddhism from India during the material periods, then, Buddhism must have been at the peak posing danger to Hindu religion on all aspects. The Buddhists must have been exercising their influence in all social, political, economic and other spheres. The Hindus must have been at the receiving end with lot of restrictions imposed upon them in their day to day religious life. Had the Buddhists been so powerful in all aspects, how the ordinary young monk Sankara could have achieved such a great feat just talking philosophy of Advaita?

Sittalai Sattanar, a Buddhist apologetic poet never mentions Sankara or Advaita, though, much has been discussed about all philosophical systems of India existing during his period. However, as he mentions about Vedavadhi, i.e. debator based on Vedas, it is evident that such concept must have existed during and before Sittalai Sattanar.

Why he left out Jainism? Jainism and Buddhism are both atheistic and reportedly anti-Vedic, anti-Brahmanic, anti-Sanskritic religions. Then, why he

